

The Brethren Evangelist.

S. J. Harrison, Editor.

"Let us go on unto Perfection."

S. H. Bashor, Vice Editor.

VOLUME XV.

WATERLOO, IOWA, SEPTEMBER 20, 1893.

NUMBER 37.

Historical.

HISTORY OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH.

BY H. R. HOLSINGER.

The Brethren church was organized at Dayton, Ohio, in June, 1883. A convention had been called at a meeting held at Ashland College, Ohio, in June of the previous year. Those who participated in these conferences were, or had been members of the Dunkard church, thence and now called German Baptist Brethren, but who, on account of disagreement with that body on modes of church government, had withdrawn from them or had been disowned by them.

A desire to organize a new denomination was disavowed by all, and in order to afford time and opportunity to effect terms of reconciliation and prove their sincerity in the matter, permanent action was postponed until the Dayton convention. The motto of former assemblies was, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," but at Dayton it was changed to "Go forward," having reference to the instructions of the Lord to Moses at the Red sea.

The participants in the Dayton conference were for the most part, strangers to each other personally. They were composed of delegates from a number of local organizations of the Progressive Brethren, who were the progressive element of the German Baptist church; of the Congregational Brethren, who had been separately organized for eight or ten years; and the Leedy Brethren, who consisted of only two or three local classes. All these elements, it might be expected, would bring into the convention more or less of their own, yet the conference was very harmonious. It continued in session for three days, and the aged reporter who took down the proceedings declared it to have been the most expeditious deliberate body he had ever attended.

It was affirmed at the Dayton convention that the name of the denomination should be the Brethren Church.

The revised New Testament was adopted as its creed and rule of church government, and for its motto: "The Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel" was agreed upon.

It was, however, declared that this organization was effected, not for the purpose of introducing a new denomination, but to re-establish the Brethren Church upon the gospel of Christ alone, as it was first introduced at Swartzenau, Germany, in 1708, by Alexander Mack and his coadjutors, and had existed over a century before Justice was throttled, Love and Mercy ignored and the decisions of men and councils exalted above the Word of God.

The society having rather reaffirmed a former declaration than made one of its own, it will be pertinent here to reproduce, as near as possible, the tenets of the original body. These are briefly set forth in the following:

First.—That it is a duty of all Christians to read the Bible for themselves and to accept it as it reads, inasmuch as "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Second.—That baptism should be administered only by triune immersion of adult believers, upon giving evidence of faith and repentance, and for the remission of sins.

Third.—That the laying on of hands should closely follow the administration of baptism.

Fourth.—That it is a duty of Christian Brethren to wash one another's feet, as Christ had enjoined by both precept and example.

Fifth.—That the Lord's Supper is a full meal, to be observed in connection with the Holy Communion, and in the evening.

Sixth.—That the anointing with oil of the sick and the salutation with the kiss of charity are apostolic injunctions and should be observed in the Church of Christ.

Seventh.—That Christians should abstain from carnal warfare, from swearing of oaths, civil and profane, from going to law with each other, and from taking of revenge or exercising of violence in any other manner, the sanction of divorces except for fornication, and the indulgence of the appetites and passions in eating and drinking and decoration of the body.

The above articles may be said to have been the specialties or peculiarities of the Dunkard church at the time of its organization. On other points of faith and practice they were in harmony with the other protestant denominations of that period.

There were but eight persons in this original organization: five men and three women; all fairly intelligent and some of more than ordinary capability. The leader among them was first baptized by one of their number who had been selected to that duty by lot and whose name has never been revealed, who in turn administered the ordinance to the others.

After the organization at Dayton active and aggressive work began. Congregations were organized in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kansas and Nebraska and others scattering over the Middle and Western states. They were mostly formed of seceding German Baptists, who, galled and jaded under the yoke of mandatory rule, sought the freedom of the Gospel, and in some cases united with the Brethren by entire congregations. In other places large withdrawals formed a nucleus, to which were added new converts by protracted efforts, and these were organized into churches. Several able evangelists were kept in the field and did effectual work. At the time of the Dayton conference

perhaps not over one thousand communicants could have been reckoned. There was much indecision and wavering even among those who had declared themselves to be progressive. There was a dread of the ecclesiastical scalpel.

Soon after the Dayton convention the name of the *Progressive Christian*, which had been the mouthpiece of the Progressive party was changed to the *Brethren Evangelist* and it was recognized as the organ of the Church.

Ashland College, the educational institution of the Church, was revived and prosperity was reported from all quarters.

Five years later another convention was held at Ashland, Ohio, when it was claimed the church numbered 5,000, and consisted of 150 congregations, and over two hundred ministers.

The next general convention was held during the last days of August 1892, at Warsaw, Indiana. It was regarded as a successful meeting of the kind, harmonious in its councils and enjoyable in its social departments. At this time the membership was estimated at 10,000, rather above than under those figures. There were 220 names of ministers on the list, including superannuated and retired, among whom 120 were estimated to be in active service.

At the Warsaw convention it was decided that in the future all assemblies of the church for business transactions should be called conferences.

The publishing house was purchased and its control assumed by the church. It is located at Waterloo, Iowa.

Steps were taken which it was thought would bring Ashland College under the direct control of the church, and it was hoped would also liquidate the indebtedness resting upon the institution.

It was also decided to hold another conference in August, 1893, at the same place, Warsaw, Ind., to dispose of unfinished business.

There are organized churches of this denomination in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Oregon and California. Rosena, Calif.

Church Polity.

THE CHURCH—ITS ORGANIZATION AND OFFICERS.

BY E. L. BAUMAN.

The Brethren consider that the Church of Christ is a communion of saints under one divine head of government—the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the king of His kingdom, the head of His church. The Gospel of Christ, the New Testament Scriptures, is the Constitution, dictated by the Holy Spirit which constitutes the foundation of the apostles and prophets upon which his institution, the Christian church, is builded. I Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23, Eph. 1:22.

The true Christian church is composed of all who have a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have associated together under the constitution above named, and are building upon such foundation. These constitute in their organized capacity a CONGREGATION of congregations, each built upon the same foundation, and not being under the jurisdiction of any other congregation. Still, these particular congregations, wherever located, though equally independent of one another as to management of their peculiar affairs, are, by virtue of one common Lord, faith and baptism, under obligations to co-operate with one another in all measures promotive of the great ends of the great salvation through Christ.

In Apostolic days the co-operative associations of churches followed the political associations as they existed, and we have the churches of Judea, Gallatia, Achaia, Pontus, Cappadocia, &c. So we may at the present time have the churches of the different political divisions associated together in church work.

Although the facts, precepts, ordinances and worship of the Christian church as given by the inspired writers, must, like the ark of the covenant, not be touched by cherubim or seraphim, much less by uninspired human hands, yet the co-operation of the churches is necessary and abundantly authorized by the New Testament Scriptures. This co-operation is for the purpose of promoting the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in other ways than to presume to change, abridge, or enlarge the facts, precepts, ordinances and worship of the Christian church. All the churches of Rome were addressed by Paul as the saints in Rome. All the churches of the Gentiles united in salutation with Priscilla and Aquila. Rom. 16:24. The churches of Christ united in salutations with Paul to the Romans, Rom. 16:16. Paul addressed the church at Corinth, "All the saints which are in all Achaia," I Cor. 1:2, II Cor. 1:1. The whole of the ninth chapter of I Corinthians speaks of the co-operation of churches in public contributions for common objects. All of the Epistles of the New Testament are proofs that co-operation of the churches was the very essence of the christian institution. This co-operation was brought about by the apostles. They saw after the wants of the different churches; they were called upon to help settle local difficulties; and Titus was authorized to ordain elders in every church, and "set in order the things which are lacking." Titus 1:5. As there are no apostles at the present day the inter-congregational relationship existing among the churches justifies the conclusion that churches in their district and general conference should make provision to select members

who shall act the part of a Titus in assisting the congregations to perfect their organizations, and setting of them in order.

In some of the districts of the Brethren churches this duty has been assigned to an Evangelist, called the district evangelist, and in other districts an Elder or committee of elders have been chosen and designated for this duty.

II. CHURCH OFFICERS.

The officers in charge of the administration of the affairs of a local church are, 1st, Elders or Bishops. 2d, Deacons. The two first named are considered to be identical, according to the Scriptures: Acts 20:17-20. Titus 1:5-7; I Pet. 5:1-2.

Churches may have a plurality of Elders according to scriptural precedent. Acts 14:23; 15:24, 6, 22; 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; but these do not always give themselves wholly to their spiritual calling. As among the early churches there were those who had no elders, and only some that had a plurality of elders, so there may be churches at the present day existing for a while without being complete in their organization.

The duties that pertain to the office of Elder or Bishop is to provide for the spiritual wants of the flock of God; to rule well; to keep things in order, and thus exercise a general oversight of the church, watching for the good of their souls, as they that must give account. This according to Acts 22:28; I Pet. 5:2; I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17. It is considered that I Tim. 5:17, "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine," applies especially to those Elders or Bishops who devote their time as pastors of churches in connection with overseeing the church, thus performing a double portion of the labor.

II. The Deacons have charge of the temporal affairs of the church. Their qualifications are described in I Tim. 3:8-10. The word *Deacons* in its simple etymological sense means a ministering servant. The qualification "apt to teach," is not required of a deacon, as of an elder or bishop, hence it is to be inferred that the deacon should be chosen with special reference to his qualifications as a manager of the temporal affairs of the church, ministering to the temporal wants of the church, yet aptness to teach would not disqualify him for the office of deacon but might subsequently lead to his promotion to Elder or Bishop. All its officers when fully proved are to be formally and solemnly set apart by the imposition of the hands of the presbytery or Eldership. The congregation chooses, the Elders ordain.

GOVERNMENT.

The congregation, the church, the multitude of the faithful are the foundation of official power. The body of Christ, governed by the will of Christ, the head of the body, is the foundation and spring of all official power or privilege. Christ is the one law giver, and His church is restricted to what He commands. The church has nothing to do with law making. The details and business services of the church must always be in strict harmony with the law of Christ.

The church has been given judicial and executive power by Christ. Each congregation must decide upon the qualifications of its membership, but such an act is judicial. The judicial element in the discipline of membership is commanded in the scriptures by Christ. Matt. 18:17. Paul presents it in I Cor. 5:12. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira were commanded to exercise discipline, implying judicious action. Whenever the church puts in execution any of Christ's commands, the executive power is exercised. The church is commanded to execute the Great Commission. Acts 13:3; 15:40.

Judicial and Executive power is lodged in the congregation and not only in the officials of the church. The whole church at Corinth was reproved for not dealing promptly with an offender. I Cor. 5:2-5. They were to deliver him to Satan when they were assembled together, verse 2, 2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Cor. 5:12-13. In the exercise of these powers the church is limited in its judgment to the exclusion of members only. Rom. 12:19; 1 Cor. 5:13; Deut. 32:35. The primary duty in administering discipline is to save. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 1:20.

The right of private judgment must be granted to the individual in matters not immoral and in which different members may entertain different views, and, consequently, different conscientious scruples. How one should fashion his apparel, the food he shall eat, or how he shall order his household are matters of private judgment not to be interfered with by a fellow member as long as his actions do not invade the rights of others. 1 Cor. 10:28-29; Rom. 14:3-5; Col. 2:16; Rom. 14:10-13, 21. Some liberty in the interpretation of scripture is also allowed. Rom. 14:4; Phil. 3:16.

The Brethren church aims to be governed in its church government by the maxim of Chillingworth: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." The law of Christian charity is the supreme law of religion, morality and expediency. It is the soul and spirit of the christian church. Christ in establishing his church contemplates that love should reign supreme among His followers, and there is no arrangement and provisions made to keep together a carnal, worldly, self-willed, unregenerate people.

Doctrinal.

FAITH.

BY W. J. H. BAUMAN.

Faith is the foundation of everything. See Heb,